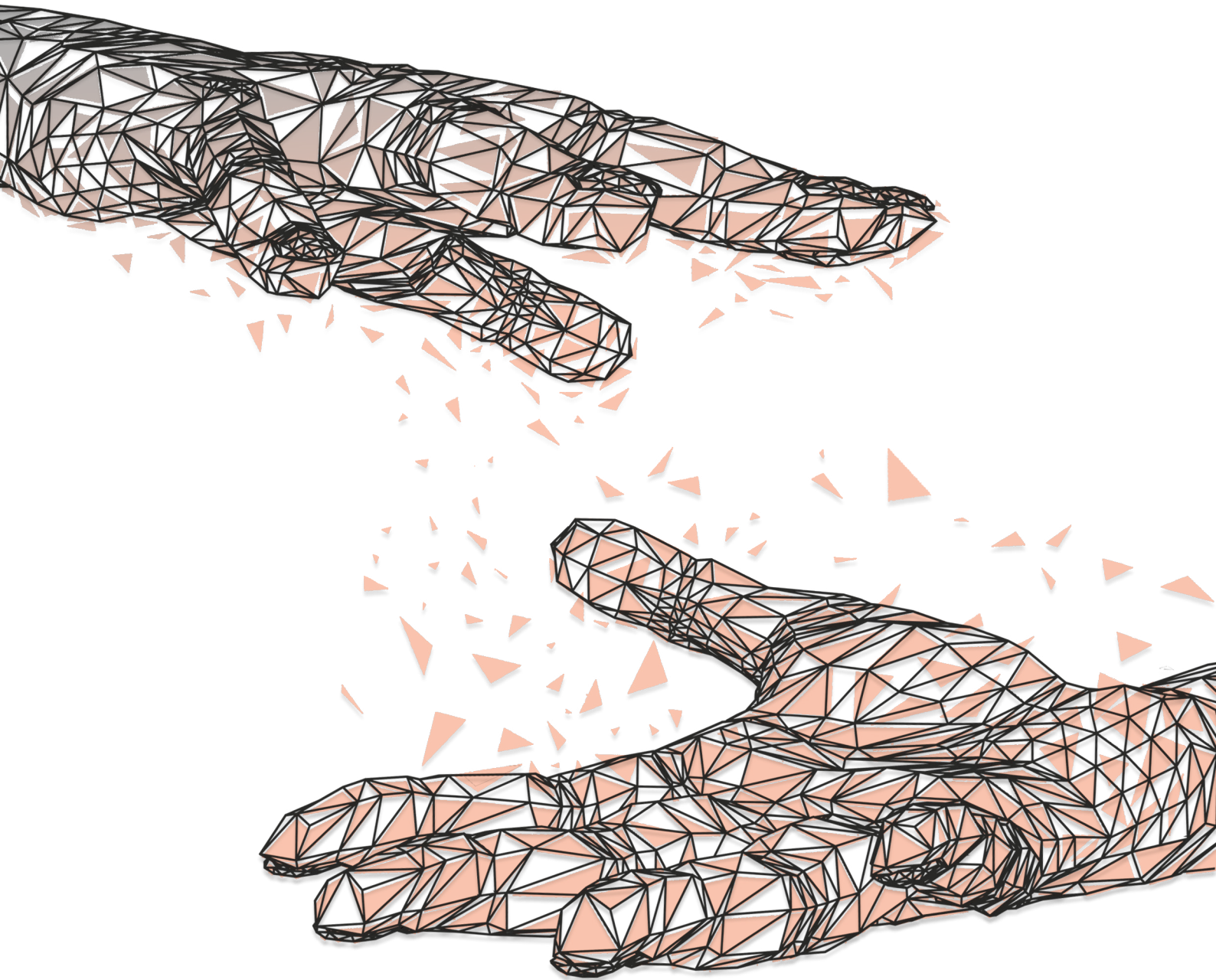


# COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY CERTIFICATION COURSE



## PRE-ASSUMPTIONS OF PERSON CENTRED THERAPY

## PRE-ASSUMPTIONS OF PERSON CENTRED THERAPY

Whenever we enter a conversation with somebody for the first time, we will always immediately operate from our inbuilt pre-assumptions, and this can influence our counselling techniques negatively if not monitored. The pre-assumptions proposed in this workbook are suggested as a foundational, professional alternatives which ensure our habitual and innate pre-assumptions do not negatively influence our work as a counsellor. The role of a counsellor is not to fix, judge, or instruct, but to bring out the best in other people by providing them with unconditional positive regard and the environment to communicate with a congruent, authentic, trustworthy individual who accepts them unconditionally.

These pre-assumptions are based on Carl Rogers' belief that all human beings are good to the core; and whether or not you personally subscribe to this belief, it's important to recognise that this approach in counselling is critical if you want to play an active role in nurturing trust based relationships, and create wholesome and healthy environments for your clients. Without these aspects in your counselling approach, clients will find it extremely difficult to trust you enough to truly open up, which ultimately hinders the growth of themselves and your own as a counsellor.

It's important to remember that pre-assumptions in a counselling context aren't about having an opinion on something, or about being right or wrong; but are rather prescribed thought bases which allow you to consider other perspectives and perceptions in your counselling practices. By subscribing to these pre-assumptions, either loosely or devoutly, you will have a greater success rate in helping your clients formulate more accurate expectations of their future.

This workbook will break down each of the pre-assumptions covered in the prior lectures, and challenge you to compare these pre-assumptions to those you instinctively have. This isn't an exercise about who is right or wrong, but about creating a healthy environment for others. For each question posed, write down your instinctual pre-assumption and then write down a formulated pre-assumption which is in accordance to person centred therapy.

**1.** First impressions are lasting impressions. Think about the pre-assumptions you have about people you pass in the street, based on their physical appearance (such as fashion sense, hair style, weight etc.). Write down the pre-assumptions you're now consciously aware that you have and ask yourself if they are conducive to conditioning unconditional positive regard.



# PRE-ASSUMPTIONS OF PERSON CENTRED THERAPY

## BEING BETTER IS BETTER THAN JUST FEELING BETTER

We all experience life physically, emotionally, rationally, volitionally and spiritually; and because of this, people wrongly conclude that once they feel better, life will be better. Unfortunately this isn't the case, as our emotions play a very small role in our existence, and "feeling better" is a fleeting sensation.

Alfred Korzybski's assertion that "the map is not the territory" suggests that we all see the world differently because we go through life filling in the details of our own private, mental maps. But these maps do not always feature all the details of the reality surrounding us and the world we live in. What is needed for a better life is a commitment to personal growth, and dedicating our time to however that may come about, either through knowledge, or by broadening our understanding or experiences.

**2.** Identify a negative emotion you are experiencing in your life right now and take the time to identify what real world problem it relates to. Perhaps you're feeling defeated because of your weight, or you're feeling stressed because of your workload. First, write down what you'd ideally like someone to say to you to make you feel better about the situation.



**3.** Now, having identified the real world, external cause which is inciting this emotional response from you, write down what proactive steps you can make to change the real world problem.



**4.** Which of your two answers do you think would have a more significant impact on you? If you recognise any mental resistance you're experiencing against the proactive change option, document it down and think about why you're resisting change.





# PRE-ASSUMPTIONS OF PERSON CENTRED THERAPY

## FOCUS IMPACTS FEELINGS

It's important to understand that those who just want to feel better are lacking guidance in self-ownership, and haven't taken responsibility on how they are living their life. What people focus on in life will directly impact and influence how they emotionally experience life, and it's the role of a counsellor to highlight this to their client. Minor modifications in our thinking incite huge changes in the way we live day to day.

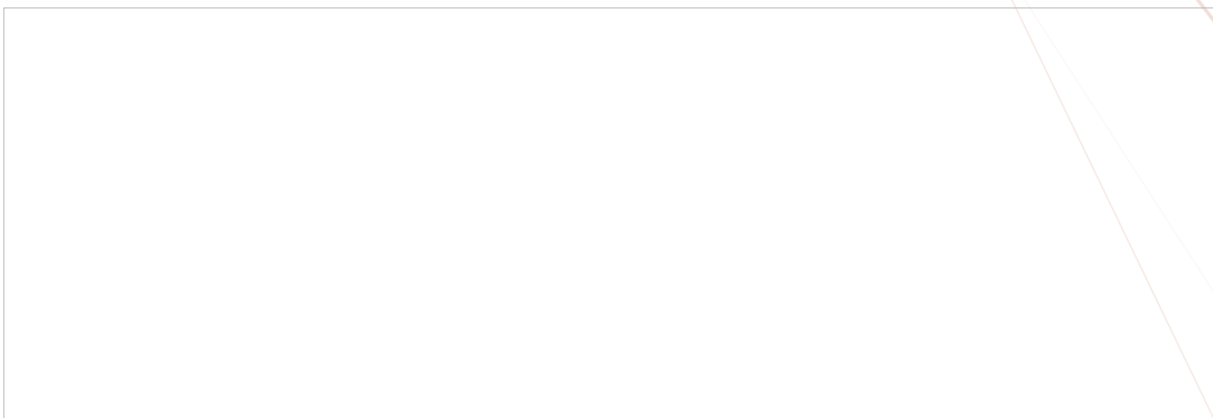
**5.** Think of an example when you took responsibility for yourself and how that changed your life. Can you remember what motivated you to take responsibility, or what you had to overcome? Write down what you can remember of your mental process during this time and think of how you can uncover universal principles in your own experience which you can use to give to clients as guidance prompts.



## PEOPLE HAVE GOOD INTENTIONS, BUT BAD HABITS

It's part of societal norm, even media entertainment, to slander and judge other people. A lot of negative judgement is justified, particularly when it comes to cruel and evil behaviours and actions, but as counsellors we are at times expected to work with people who we don't morally agree with. Working productively with someone we may vehemently disagree with, or disapprove of, requires a counsellor to separate their clients actions, attitudes and behaviours from the person themselves and give them unconditional, positive regard. This does not mean we as counsellors are justifying their behaviour, but rather working with them to understand the true, psychological reasons and intentions underlying their behaviours. The second you make an assumption about whether somebody is good or bad, you put them into a box without getting to know them intimately, and you cannot help anyone better themselves without having earned their trust.

**6.** Identify bad habits you have which you know are unproductive or self destructive (such as overeating, not working out, procrastinating etc.) Write these down, and then identify the positive intention behind each bad habit.



## PRE-ASSUMPTIONS OF PERSON CENTRED THERAPY

7. Have you ever misspoke in someone's presence, or unintentionally offended someone, and recognised your intention was lost during the delivery? Perhaps you have been on the receiving end of such an incident also. Can you recall when went through your mind when you tried to amend the mistake, or when you were accepting someone's apology that they "didn't mean to say something like that"? Write down your experiences in this situation and pay close attention to how easily good intentions can lost in translation.

### PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY NURTURES EMPOWERMENT

A counsellor's responsibility is to exercise unconditional positive regard, empathy, authenticity, congruence and impartiality towards their clients. However, it is not their job to instruct their clients. Our role is to make sure clients are aware of their need to take responsibility for themselves, which includes their thought patterns and behaviours. Only by taking responsibility will they feel empowered enough to make the changes they need to make which are in alignment with our given needs.

### HUMANNESS IS A PRODUCT OF NATURE AND NURTURE

How we come to be the person we are today evolves through an amalgamation of nurture and nature. We all have an innate set of values and interests in life which we desire to fulfil in some way, but another part of the process of finding and learning about our identity is through the comparisons we make between ourselves and other people when growing up. The people who we tend to compare ourselves to the most are actually those who nurture us, such as our parents, guardians or siblings. These figures play a greater role in who we become than we could ever imagine. It is from them we pick up our mannerisms, behaviours, esteem, self-belief, reactionary responses, and also our bad habits such as procrastination, reliance on addictive substances or overeating.

Our humanness and our ability to conduct ourselves are impacted by both our human natures and our external environments: such as relationships, families, societies, and work environments. Some people believe the limiting beliefs they have succumbed to in life are true. If a person believes they don't have the ability to progress forward in life, they're never going to try. If you have the belief in your own ability, you're not going to have a problem pursuing your goals. There are some psychotherapists who subscribe to the idea that the only people who can help others move forward in life are those who are professionally trained and qualified; but were that the case, the human race wouldn't have evolved over the millions of years the way it has done. All people have the ability within themselves to move forward in life, and it's important to remember that all of us are on the same journey of learning to be better together.



## PRE-ASSUMPTIONS OF PERSON CENTRED THERAPY

**8.** What questions would you ask a client in order to help them identify which parts of their character were part of their nature or nurture?



**9.** Taking into consideration how major a role nurture plays in one's identity, how would you help a client find the confidence and strength to overpower the negative beliefs and behaviours their nurturing has instilled in them?

